

### THE WILMINGTON GIANT.

ALL of us are acquainted with the enormous representations of the human figure in the sculptures of Egypt, which some of those of Greece are said to have equalled. Recent investigators, such as Mr. Squier, of New York, have informed us of the giant sculptures in the cities of Central America. Mr. Layard has unearthed the immense man-headed bulls of Nineveh, the mysteries respecting which are perhaps about to be unravelled by the relics recently brought by Mr. George Smith from Mesopotamia, in the form of inscriptions impressed in clay and incised in stone tablets, which are now being cleansed and deciphered in the British Museum; where also may be found part of the freight of her Majesty's ship *Topaze*, being one of the great human effigies of Easter Island. All these were amongst the examples upon which Mr. Phené, F.S.A., lately based the theory of his paper, "An Age of Colossi." But the feature of immediate interest to the inhabitants of Britain is his assertion that we have still examples of colossal figures wrought by the Celts, which unite this island with the age or the class of people who laboured at producing gigantic emblems in the four quarters of the globe; but, as he showed, within a defined area, or rather zone.

The largest of these, perhaps we may say the largest representation of the human figure ever executed in the world, is on the estate of the Duke of Devonshire, in Sussex, and a few miles inland from Eastbourne; and as operations upon it are now in hand, instituted by the Rev. W. de St. Croix, vicar of Glynde, as secretary to the Sussex Archaeological Society, we propose to give some particulars respecting it, as we concur with Dr. Beddoe, the president of the Anthropological Section, in thinking this part of the subject brought forward by Mr. Phené well worthy attention.

The enormous figure is 240 feet high, and there is one at Cerne Abbas, in Dorsetshire, 180 feet high, both of which have till lately been loosely attributed to the monks of the middle ages, simply because the oldest traditions of those localities give no

indication of the date of their formation, coupled with the fact of their being in the vicinity of ancient monkish residences; and those who gave it as their opinion that they were antecedent to mediæval times, and of Celtic origin, only attempted to support such opinions by conjecture.

In a paper lately read before the Royal Institute of British Architects, in London, Mr. Phené showed reasons against their origin being monkish, as well as in favour of their being Celtic creations; and in consequence of this paper, the Sussex Archaeological Society, with the approbation of the Duke of Devonshire, who headed the list of subscribers, determined to take measures to avert the obliteration by time of the outline of the Wilmington Giant.

Mr. Phené has pointed out that this vast representation is not only in the attitude of the Colossus of Rhodes, but that its proportions are just double those of that statue; that it is unlike any other representation, either in barbarous or classical device, except an almost exact delineation on one of the ancient Gnostic gems; and that, while the last figure is accompanied by solar and lunar emblems, both the carving at Cerne Abbas, and also that at Wilmington, have, in their vicinity, British earthworks of a lunar form.

The descriptions by Cæsar and Strabo of the Celtic deity to which human sacrifices were offered, refer to a gigantic effigy of the human figure, which Mr. Phené argues could not have been, as has been supposed, a great wicker idol, but rather an idol in that form, and surrounded by a palisade, or (*contexta*) "interwoven" barrier, and that in such area the wild beasts and cattle mentioned by Strabo were placed with human victims. The Sussex figure has moreover two staves, as indications of travelling, and Cæsar refers to a Celtic deity as a god of journeying, of which many images or representations then existed.

The fact that a number of curious bronze Celts, and ancient cinerary urns filled with bones, have been found in the vicinity of this figure, which is incised in the chalk cliff, on the range of downs connected with Beachy Head, gives support to the idea of its Celtic origin. A further corroboration exists in the adjoining heights being occupied by British tumuli. But apart from such evidences, one of the great points on which Mr. Phené rests for these figures not having

been made by the monks is, that they are not such as Christian men of a religious calling would have made—they being nude, and otherwise totally unlike early Christian art, while that they are very ancient works is unquestionable. Those who have suggested their mediæval origin have imagined the one at Wilmington to represent a religious devotee, or pilgrim, but it need hardly be observed that this only increases the improbability. That early Christian art should descend to such representations is a proposition without example, while that it should so represent a devotee is impossible; whereas it is just what would be expected in the cruelty of a religion which tolerated human sacrifice. If, as Dr. Beddoe suggested, the explanation given in this paper may probably be the correct one, it solves a difficulty over which more than one antiquary has stumbled, as we find Mr. John James, F.S.A.; getting over the improbability of great wicker idols by suggesting that the victims were put into "large wicker baskets, and *thrown* into the fire."